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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [AU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: (S/NF) AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT UNLIKELY TO SUPPLY
PISTOLS TO IRAQI POLICE AND MILITARY

REF: 10/15/07 ROYSTON/NELSON EMAIL

Classified By: CDA Scott F. Kilner. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (S) Senior civil servants in the Ministry of Economy (MoE) have reiterated to the Embassy that, if obliged to make a decision, the MoE would deny an export license to ship 13,000 Glock pistols to Iraqi police and military units. Although the MoE approved similar shipments over the last two years, our interlocutors have told us that concerns about significant diversions have caused FonMin Plassnik to weigh in against approval of the sale. Turkish and Syrian authorities have also notified the GoA about seizures of Glocks on their territories. Negative press reports about the Glock exports to Iraq, persistent attention on the issue from opposition MPs, and "bad blood" between Glock's CEO and Minister of Economics Martin Bartenstein have further increased the probability that the application will ultimately be rejected. The MoE has not formally rejected the application, as the company continues to engage in a lobbying effort to persuade the government to approve the license. End Summary.

Ministry of Economy: Concerned About Diverted Glocks

¶2. (S) On October 24, EonPol Counselor and EconUnit Chief met with JosefMayer, Chief (U/S-level) of the MoE's Foreign Trade Section to discuss the delay in approving a license to export 13,000 Glock pistols to the Iraqi police and military forces. Purchase of these Glocks is being funded and organized by the U.S. military. Mayer noted that the MoE had already approved similar shipments to Iraqi security forces over the last two years. However, Mayer maintained that approval of additional exports "would be difficult" because of the large numbers of Glocks from previous U.S.-funded/organized shipments that have been diverted in the region. Moreover, the MFA has notified the MoE that it has concerns about the proposed export application. Although the MFA has only an advisory role in such export applications, Mayer stressed that it would be "virtually impossible" for the MoE to ignore the MFA's views on such a sensitive issue.

¶3. (S) Mayer said that the MoE had not formally rejected Glock's application. The company continues to provide information in an attempt to convince the MoE that better controls are in place to prevent further diversion of the pistols. Mayer implied that the present situation -- no formal rejection -- could continue indefinitely. Although

the MoE is normally obliged to make a decision on a license within six months of its submission, each intervention from an applicant re-starts that clock.

Political Winds Blowing Against Further Exports

¶4. (S) In an earlier discussion with EconUnit Chief, Helmut Krehlik (strictly protect), MoE's Division Head for Export and Import Control, said that the Glock application "was virtually dead" for several reasons. According to Krehlik, under Austrian law, the MoE must grant an approval, unless it has reason to believe the weapons could be diverted from the end-user. He noted that the GoA knows of two cases where Glock pistols have been diverted. Turkish intelligence officials have notified their Austrian counterparts and the MoE that they have seized sizable quantities of Glocks on the black market. The GoT has expressed concern that PKK rebels could easily obtain the pistols. In a second case, Syrian authorities notified the Austrian Embassy in Damascus that they had seized an unknown quantity of Glocks at the Syrian-Iraqi border. According to Krehlik, the GoA is frankly concerned that elements of the Iraqi security forces are actively involved in criminal or terrorist activities.

¶5. (S) Krehlik confirmed that Foreign Minister Plassnik had weighed in against the license. He opined that, given the FM's concerns, negative press reports about Glocks that have been diverted or are unaccounted for, it would be "political suicide" for Minister of Economics Martin Bartenstein to approve the license. In addition, the gadfly Green MP Peter Pilz continues to highlight the disappearance of Glock pistols in Iraq.

¶6. (S) According to Krehlik, lobbying efforts by Gaston

Glock, founder and owner of the company, have seriously backfired. Glock reportedly pressed his case in meetings with Chancellor Gusenbauer and MoE Bartenstein. Although both Gusenbauer and Bartenstein rebuffed Glock's pleas, Glock has redoubled his efforts. Bartenstein reportedly has refused to meet with the CEO again and he delegates the task of responding to Glock's letters to subordinates.

Comment

¶7. (S) Post will continue to press the GoA to approve the export license for the Glocks. However, the issue has become extremely political, with the most senior GoA officials reluctant to risk any political capital by approving the export application. Austrian press continues to highlight the problem in Iraq of weapons diversion in general and of Glocks specifically. Given the situation, it would be prudent to consider a fall-back "buy American option."
Kilner